

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

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Claim 12 (previously presented): A system for monitoring and transmitting utility status via a universal communications interface, comprising:

an input interface operative to receive a utility status signal from a utility meter;

a processor functionally coupled to the input interface for receiving the utility status signal from the input interface and operative to generate a status message based on the utility status signal;

a universal communications interface functionally coupled to the processor and configurable for communicating with a plurality of different types of communication devices, each different type of communication device operative to communicate with a receiving device via one of a plurality of different communication mediums;

a slot functionally coupled to the universal communications interface and configured to interchangeably connect one of the plurality of different types of communication devices;

wherein the processor communicates with the universal communications interface to determine which one of the plurality of different types of communication devices is connected to the slot; and

wherein the processor formats the status message into a format compatible with the connected communication device and transmits the formatted status message to the universal communications interface for transmission to the connected communications device.

Claim 13 (presently amended): The system of claim 12, wherein the plurality of different communication mediums are selected from the group consisting of radio frequency waves, ~~infrared waves~~, telephone lines, cable lines, fiber optic lines, satellite links, and power lines.

Claim 14 (presently amended): The system of claim 12, wherein the ~~input~~ utility status signal comprises an analog wave form; and

wherein the input interface comprises an analog-to-digital converter operative to convert the analog wave form into a digital signal representing the a utility status.

Claim 15 (presently amended): The system of claim 12, wherein the ~~input~~ utility status signal is received from a connect/disconnect monitor of the utility meter.

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Claim 16 (presently amended): The system of claim 12, wherein the ~~input~~ utility status signal is received from a tamper detection monitor of the utility meter.

Claim 17 (presently amended): The system of claim 12, wherein the ~~input~~ utility status signal is received from a voltage monitor of the utility meter.

Claim 18 (presently amended): The system of claim 12, wherein the ~~input~~ utility status signal is received from a current monitor of the utility meter.

Claim 19 (presently amended): The system of claim 12, wherein the ~~input~~ utility status signal is received from an outage notification monitor of the utility meter.

Claim 20 (previously presented): The system of claim 12, further comprising a memory storage functionally coupled to the processor for storing computer-executable instructions executed by the processor; and

wherein said computer-executable instructions cause the processor to determine whether the utility status signal exceeds a threshold value and, if so, to generate the status message.

Claim 21 (previously presented): The system of claim 20, wherein the memory storage further stores data relating to signal formats compatible with each of the plurality of different types of communication devices.